

# Lezgian language

**Lezgian** /ˈlɛzɡiən/<sup>[4]</sup> also called **Lezgi** or **Lezgin**, is a Northeast Caucasian language that belongs to the Lezgifc languages. It is spoken by the Lezgins, who live in southern Dagestan, northern Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and other countries. Lezgian is a literary language and an official language of Dagestan. It is classified as "vulnerable" by UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.<sup>[5]</sup>

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## Geographic distribution

In 2002, Lezgian was spoken by about 397,000 people in Russia, mainly Southern Dagestan, and in 1999 by 178,400 people in mainly the Qusar, Quba, Qabala, Oghuz, Ismailli and Khachmaz (*Xaçmaz*) provinces of northeastern Azerbaijan. Lezgian is also spoken in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Germany and Uzbekistan by immigrants from Azerbaijan and Dagestan.

There are also small populations in the Balikesir, Yalova, Izmir, Bursa regions in Turkey. The Lezgian people are concentrated mainly in Kirne (Ortaca) village of the Balikesir region.

The total number of speakers is about 800,000.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Related languages

There are nine languages in the Lezgifc language family, namely: **Lezgian**, Tabasaran, Rutul, Aghul, Tsakhur, Budukh, Kryts, Udi and Archi. These languages have the same names as their ethnic groups.

Some of its dialects are considered very different from the standard form, including the Quba dialect spoken in Azerbaijan.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Phonology

Lezgian	
<span>лезги чІал</span> <i>lezgi č'al</i> <sup>[1]</sup>	
Pronunciation	<span>[lɛzɡɪ tʃ ˈal]</span>
Native to	Russia and Azerbaijan, also spoken in Georgia
Region	Southern Dagestan, western Caspian Sea coast, central Caucasus
Ethnicity	Lezgins
Native speakers	633,610 <span> </span> (2010) <sup>[2]</sup>
Language family	Northeast Caucasian <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lezgifc<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Samur<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Eastern Samur<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lezgi–Aghul–Tabasaran<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Lezgian</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
Official status	
Official language <span> </span> in	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span>Dagestan</li></ul>
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	lez ( <span>https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=259</span> )
ISO 639-3	lez
Glottolog	lezg1247 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/lezg1247</span> ) <sup>[3]</sup>

Vowels

Vowels of Lezgian<sup>[7]</sup>

	Front		Central	Back
	plain	rounded		
<b>Close</b>	i (и)	y (уь)	ɨ (ы)	u (у)
<b>Mid</b>	e (е; э)		(ə)	o (о)
<b>Open</b>			a (а)	

- /a/ has two main allophones: [ɑ] and [ʌ]; the former prevails in closed syllables (especially before uvulars and /r/), the latter in open syllables.
- /a/ is very often rounded after labialized consonants, which may then lose their labialization.
- /e/ is open ([ɛ]) in stressed syllables
- if a vowel plus /n/ sequence is not followed by a vowel, the /n/ may be deleted and the vowel nasalized. Thus /zun/ ('I') can be pronounced [zũ].

Consonants

There are 54 consonants in Lezgian. Characters to the right are the letters of the Lezgian Cyrillic Alphabet. Note that aspiration is not normally indicated in the orthography, despite the fact that it is phonemic.

Consonants of Lezgian<sup>[8]</sup>

		Labial	Dental		(Post)- alveolar	Palatal	Velar		Uvular		Glottal
			plain	lab.			plain	lab.	plain	lab.	
<b>Nasal</b>		/m/ м	/n/ н								
<b>Plosive</b>	voiced	/b/ б	/d/ д				/g/ г	/gʷ/ гь			
	voiceless	/p/ п	/t/ т	/tʷ/ ть			/k/ к	/kʷ/ кь	/q/ къ	/qʷ/ кьь	/ʔ/ ъ
	aspirated	/pʰ/ п̣	/tʰ/ т̣	/tʷʰ/ ть̣			/kʰ/ к̣	/kʷʰ/ кь̣	/qʰ/ х̣	/qʷʰ/ х̣ь	
	ejective	/pʰ/ п̣I	/tʰ/ т̣I	/tʷʰ/ ть̣I			/kʰ/ к̣I	/kʷʰ/ кь̣I	/qʰ/ х̣	/qʷʰ/ кь̣ь	
<b>Affricate</b>	voiced		/dz/ дз		/dʒ/ дж						
	voiceless		/t͡s/ ц	/t͡sʷ/ ць	/t͡ʃ/ ч						
	aspirated		/t͡sʰ/ ц̣	/t͡sʷʰ/ ць̣	/t͡ʃʰ/ ч̣						
	ejective		/t͡sʰ/ ц̣I	/t͡sʷʰ/ ць̣I	/t͡ʃʰ/ ч̣I						
<b>Fricative</b>	voiced	/v/ в	/z/ з	/zʷ/ зь	/ʒ/ ж				/ʁ/ гь	/ʁʷ/ гьь	
	voiceless	/f/ ф	/s/ с	/sʷ/ сь	/ʃ/ ш		/x/ хь	/xʷ/ хьь	/χ/ х	/χʷ/ хь	/h/ гь
<b>Approximant</b>			/l/ л			/j/ й		/w/ в			
<b>Trill</b>			/r/ р								

Alphabets

Lezgian has been written in several different alphabets over the course of its history. These alphabets have been based on three scripts: Arabic (before 1928), Latin (1928–38), and Cyrillic (1938–present).

The Lezgian Cyrillic alphabet is as follows:<sup>[9]</sup>

А Б В Г Гь Гь Д Е Ё Ж З И Й К Кь Кь КӀ Л М Н О П ПӀ Р С Т ТӀ У Уь Ф Х Хь Хь Ц ЦӀ Ч ЧӀ Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ъ Э Ю Я  
а б в г гь гь д е ё ж з и й к кь кь кӀ л м н о п пӀ р с т тӀ у уь ф х хь хь ц цӀ ч чӀ ш щ ъ ы ъ э ю я

The Latin alphabet was as follows:

A a	Ä ä	B b	C c	Č č	Ch ch	Čh čh	D d
E e	F f	G g	Gh gh	H h	I i	J j	K k
Kh kh	L l	M m	N n	Ŋ ŋ	O o	Ö ö	P p
Ph ph	Q q	Qh qh	R r	S s	Š š	T t	Th th
U u	Ü ü	V v	X x	Ý ý	Y y	Z z	Ž ž

## Grammar

Lezgian is unusual for a Northeast Caucasian language in not having noun classes (also called "grammatical gender"). Standard Lezgian grammar features 18 grammatical cases,<sup>[10]</sup> produced by agglutinating suffixes, of which 12 are still used in spoken conversation.

### Cases

The four grammatical cases are:<sup>[8]</sup>

- Absolutive case (basic form of the word, no ending): marks the subject of an intransitive verb and the direct object of a transitive sentence. It is also used to mark a nominal predicate (who or what something turns into/becomes) and as a vocative.
- Ergative case (various endings; the most common are: -ди, -a or -e; [-di, -a or e], which are added to the Absolutive): marks the subject of transitive verbs, and the subject of some compound intransitive verbs.
- Genitive case (ending -н [-n]; added to the Ergative): marks possession. It is also used with the meaning 'of'. The genitive case precedes the noun that it modifies.
- Dative case (ending -з [-z]; added to the Ergative): usually marks the indirect object of sentences, that is the recipient of an action. It is also used to mark the subject of some verbs (mainly about emotions) and to express a point of time and direction.
- There are fourteen Locative cases:
  - Adessive case (ending -в [-v]; added to the Ergative): marks the object of some verbs to mean 'by', 'to', 'with'.
  - Adelative case (ending -вай [-vaj]; added to the Ergative): expresses movement from somewhere. It is also used with the verb 'to be able' and to express an accidental action.
  - Addirective case (ending -вди [-vdi]; added to the Ergative): used as an instrumental case, but also sometimes used with its original meaning, 'in the direction of', and more rarely 'near by'.
  - The Postessive case (ending -хъ [-qh]; added to the Ergative): means 'behind', 'at', 'toward', 'in exchange for', and 'with.' In a construction with the verb ава (ava), it expresses possession.
  - Postelative case (ending -хъай [-qhaj]; added to the Ergative): can either mean 'from' or the cause of fear or shame.
  - Postdirective case (ending -хъди [-qhdi]; added to the Ergative): rarely used case, meaning 'toward(s)'.
  - Subessive case (ending -к [-k]; added to the Ergative): means either 'below' or 'participates'.
  - Subelative case (ending -кай [-kaj]; added to the Ergative): means either 'from below', 'from', '(from) against', 'with' or 'out of' (partitive). It is also used to mark Y in the construction 'X becomes out-of-Y' and can express the topic of a sentence ('about') or the cause of emotions.
  - Subdirective case (ending -кди [-kdi]; added to the Ergative): expresses cause (never motion under), and can mean 'because' or 'of' (when in sentences such as 'the man died of a disease'.
  - Inessive case (endings -а or -е [-a or -e]; added to Absolutive): means 'at', 'in' or 'during/whilst'.
  - Inelative case (endings -ай or -ей [-aj or -ej]; added to Inessive): means 'out of' or 'in return for'.
  - Superessive case (ending -л [-l]; added to the Inessive): means 'on', and also to express the cause of some emotions.
  - Superrelative case (ending -лай [-laj]; added to the Inessive): means 'off', 'after' or 'than' (comparison).
  - Superdirective case (ending -лди [-ldi]; added to the Inessive): means 'onto', 'until', 'in' (when followed by an adjective), as an instrumental case (e.g. language) or instructive with abstract nouns.

## Declension

There are two types of declensions.

### First declension

Case	Singular		Plural	
Absolutive	буба	<i>buba</i>	бубаяр	<i>bubajar</i>
Ergative	бубади	<i>bubadi</i>	бубайри	<i>bubajri</i>
Genitive	бубадин	<i>bubadin</i>	бубайрин	<i>bubajrin</i>
Dative	бубадиз	<i>bubadiz</i>	бубайриз	<i>bubajriz</i>
Adessive	бубадив	<i>bubadiv</i>	бубайрив	<i>bubajriv</i>
Adelative	бубадивай	<i>bubadivaj</i>	бубайривай	<i>bubajrivaj</i>
Addirective	бубадивди	<i>bubadivdi</i>	бубайривди	<i>bubajrivdi</i>
Postessive	бубадихъ	<i>bubadiq<sup>h</sup></i>	бубайрихъ	<i>bubajriq<sup>h</sup></i>
Postelative	бубадихъай	<i>bubadiq<sup>h</sup>aj</i>	бубайрихъай	<i>bubajriq<sup>h</sup>aj</i>
Postdirective	бубадихъди	<i>bubadiq<sup>h</sup>di</i>	буабайрихъди	<i>buabajriq<sup>h</sup>di</i>
Subessive	бубадик	<i>bubadik<sup>h</sup></i>	бубайрик	<i>bubajrik<sup>h</sup></i>
Subelative	бубадикай	<i>bubadik<sup>h</sup>aj</i>	бубайрикай	<i>bubajrik<sup>h</sup>aj</i>
Subdirective	бубадикди	<i>bubadik<sup>h</sup>di</i>	бубайрикди	<i>bubajrik<sup>h</sup>di</i>
Inessive	бубада	<i>bubada</i>	бубайра	<i>bubajra</i>
Inelative	бубадай	<i>bubadaj</i>	бубайрай	<i>bubajraj</i>
Superessive	бубадал	<i>bubadal</i>	бубайрал	<i>bubajral</i>
Superelative	бубадалай	<i>bubadalaj</i>	бубайралай	<i>bubajralaj</i>
Superdirective	бубадалди	<i>bubadaldi</i>	бубайралди	<i>bubajraldi</i>

## Vocabulary

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### Numbers

The numbers of Lezgian are:

уд	<i>ud</i>	zero
сад	<i>sad</i>	one
къвед	<i>q<sup>w</sup>ed</i>	two
пуд	<i>pud</i>	three
къуд	<i>q<sup>u</sup>ud</i>	four
вад	<i>vad</i>	five
ругуд	<i>rugud</i>	six
ирид	<i>irid</i>	seven
муъжуъд	<i>muʒud</i>	eight
кІуъд	<i>k<sup>u</sup>ud</i>	nine
цІуд	<i>ts<sup>u</sup>ud</i>	ten
цІусад	<i>ts<sup>u</sup>usad</i>	eleven
цІикъвед	<i>ts<sup>i</sup>iq<sup>w</sup>ed</i>	twelve
цІипуд	<i>ts<sup>i</sup>ipud</i>	thirteen
цІикъуд	<i>ts<sup>i</sup>iq<sup>u</sup>ud</i>	fourteen
цІувад	<i>ts<sup>u</sup>uvad</i>	fifteen
цІуругуд	<i>ts<sup>u</sup>urugud</i>	sixteen
цІерид	<i>ts<sup>e</sup>erid</i>	seventeen

цІемуъжуъд	<i>ts'emyzud</i>	eighteen
цІекІуъд	<i>ts'ek'yd</i>	nineteen
къад	<i>qad</i>	twenty
	<i>qadtsud</i>	thirty
яхцІур	<i>jaxts'ur</i>	forty
	<i>jaxtsurtsud</i>	fifty
пудкъад	<i>pudqad</i>	sixty
	<i>pudqadtsud</i>	seventy
къудкъад	<i>q'udqal</i>	eighty
	<i>qudqaltsud</i>	ninety
виш	<i>viʃ</i>	one hundred
агъзур	<i>aʒʒur</i>	one thousand

Nouns following a number are always in the singular. Numbers precede the noun. "Cад" and "къвед" lose their final "-д" before a noun.

Lezgian numerals work in a similar fashion to the French ones, and are based on the vigesimal system in which "20", not "10", is the base number. "Twenty" in Lezgian is "къад", and higher numbers are formed by adding the suffix -ни to the word (which becomes "къанни" - the same change occurs in пудкъад and къудкъад) and putting the remaining number afterwards. This way 24 for instance is къанни къуд ("20 and 4"), and 37 is къанни цІерид ("20 and 17"). Numbers over 40 are formed similarly (яхцІур becomes яхцІурни). 60 and 80 are treated likewise. For numbers over 100 just put a number of hundreds, then (if need be) the word with a suffix, then the remaining number. 659 is thus ругуд вишни яхцІурни цІекІуъд. The same procedure follows for 1000. 1989 is агъзурни кІуъд вишни къудкъанни кІуъд in Lezgi.

## References

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## External links

- Lezgi-English online dictionary (<https://gaf.lezgichal.ru/>)
- Appendix:Cyrillic script

- [Notes on the Lezgi language \(http://www.peterlin.pl/lezgi/chal.html\)](http://www.peterlin.pl/lezgi/chal.html)
  - [Languages of the World report \(http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/lang?id=3072\)](http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/lang?id=3072)
  - [Lezgian basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database \(http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\nccl\lez&first=0\)](http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\nccl\lez&first=0)
  - [Lezgian Dictionary + Mobile apps \(https://web.archive.org/web/20150624115355/http://lezgi.publicdictionary.ru/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20150624115355/http://lezgi.publicdictionary.ru/)
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